

January 30, 2017

Committee on Human Services
State of Connecticut

It has been brought to my attention that legislation expanding access by deaf and hard of hearing citizens to movie theaters is up for consideration by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly, as introduced by Senator Terri Gerratana, 6th District.

I want to wholeheartedly express my support for this Act mandating compliance by movie theaters, as having grown up with parents who were both, coincidentally, hard of hearing in one ear and deaf in the other, I can attest to the difficulty they had in enjoying public events in general – plays, lectures, and films. Their hearing aids only exacerbated the problem. The American Disability Act appeared promising, but sadly, never brought substantive change for my parents and friends with similar hearing losses.

If, as I have been made to understand, a simple matter of flipping a switch on major motion pictures would enable hard of hearing and deaf citizens to enjoy open caption screenings of digital films at no cost to the theater owner, a whole new world of entertainment will open up for those who so want to enjoy the films they have missed for so long!

It is frustrating, disappointing and embarrassing for those who are deaf and/or hard of hearing to attend a film and pretend to understand what is being said. That painful experience keeps so many of our citizens out of movie theaters entirely and I know from personal experience that they would rather sit at home than endure several hours of misery. Enactment of this legislation will not only be a boon to the economy, but will enable the wonderful films of our time to reach a much wider audience, as I suspect the number of people who stay away from theaters because of this issue is far greater than could ever be estimated.

This legislation is a long-overdue step forward to insure equality for all!

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joyce DiCamillo".

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